



# SECTION A: INTRODUCTION



## CHAPTER CONTENTS

- Why Plan for Hike and Bike Trails in Sugar Land
- Purpose of the Citywide Trails Master Plan
- Key Guiding Principles and Goals of the Plan
- Trail Planning Methodology
- Previous Trail Recommendations- The Path to This Master Plan
  - Specific Goals of the Master Plan
  - Planning by Sectors





*The development of a citywide trail system clearly speaks to Sugar Land's commitment to establishing and maintaining a very high quality of life standard for its citizens. This commitment to quality tells everyone that that Sugar Land will always seek to be a premier place to live in and to do business.*

**Why Plan for Hike and Bike Trails in Sugar Land**

Across the United States, trails are always one of the most popular recreation features provided by communities. In Texas, with favorable outdoor weather much of the year, trails are often the single most frequently requested community amenity. Trails offer many benefits:

- Trails are popular because they offer something for everyone, from the very young to the very active to the elderly simply seeking a tranquil place to walk and enjoy being outside. Trails provide an opportunity to see the beautiful natural parts of the city, and they provide opportunities to see other neighborhoods and newer parts of the city.
- Trails support economic development by creating attractive greenbelts that can revitalize areas and enhance neighborhoods. Trails provide access to local businesses, and provide tourism opportunities. A great system of places to walk and ride makes Sugar Land an even more attractive place to live and invest in.
- Trails promote a healthy lifestyle by providing opportunities to engage in exercise in a fun setting, whether by simply walking or through more strenuous activities such as running, cycling or rollerblading.
- Trails help to preserve and enhance greenbelt areas and can beautify streets. Imagine Sugar Land twenty years from now, and imagine how attractive green corridors such as the Brazos River, will be. Imagine also beautiful streets with trees and shaded places to walk and ride.
- Trails teach us about the history and culture of Sugar Land by preserving key historical features and areas, as well as the landscape context around those areas.
- Trails enhance the transportation system in Sugar Land by providing alternative ways to get to key city destinations such as schools, libraries, parks, recreation and senior centers, pools, and city hall. They also provide ways to get to work and to retail areas.

- Finally and most importantly, the development of a citywide trail system clearly speaks to Sugar Land's commitment to establishing a very high quality of life standard for its citizens. This commitment to quality tells everyone that that Sugar Land will always seek to be a premier place to live in and to do business.

**The Purpose of the Citywide Trails Master Plan**

Sugar Land's Comprehensive Plan and the 2005 Approved Citywide Parks Master Plan both pointed to trails as a key need. These long range plans envisioned a system of trails that connected all of Sugar Land, allowing one to go from one end of the city to the other in a fun and healthy way. Both of these plans called for the development of a Citywide planning document that would identify key trail corridors and guide the creation of a citywide network. Such a plan would provide guidance on the preferred location for trail corridors and will help the city acquire greenbelt corridors for trail use.

A Citywide hike and bike plan would also provide a framework through which the City of Sugar Land and the private sector can work together to jointly create beautiful and meaningful trail corridors; and make informed decisions as to how to fund trail development in an satisfactory manner.

This Trails Master Plan is intended to be flexible, so as to remain a viable tool as Sugar Land continues to grow and change. The plan will continue to serve for many years, but should be periodically updated so as to reflect current conditions within the city, its neighboring communities and the greater Fort Bend and Harris County area as a whole.





Key goal of the Master Plan is to create a trail system that links all parts of the city.

**Key Guiding Principles and Goals of the Hike and Bike Trails Master Plan**

The system of trails and pedestrian connection recommended in this master plan creates an opportunity to enhance not only recreation opportunities but also to influence the appearance of much of Sugar Land. This plan is both visionary and practical. The visionary component foresees a network of beautiful corridors that seamlessly allow a user to easily go from anywhere in Sugar Land by walking or riding. The practical side envisions connections to all neighborhoods via readily accessible, wide, safe and attractive pathways.

The following guiding principles were developed through the master planning process, and serve to guide the alignment and layout of both the trails proposed by this document, as well as additional pathways proposed in the future.

- (1) Create a system** – The ultimate goal is to create an interconnected system of trails that allow multiple connections across all of Sugar Land. Segments currently unconnected should be joined into an overall system of continuous trails.
- (2) Connectivity** – Where possible, trails corridors and alignments should be designed so as to enhance linkages between parks, neighborhoods, schools, neighborhood services and key civic and community destinations.

**(3) Access** – Access to the trail system must be maximized as much as is feasible. This may range from simple sidewalk connections to the trails, to complete “trailheads” with parking and comfort facilities such as shade shelters and restrooms.

**(4) Identity** – Trail segments should be designed so that they convey the physical and historical character of the City of Sugar Land and relate to the neighborhoods through which the trail corridors pass.

**(5) Learning** – Trail corridors provide unique opportunities to learn about the history, culture, and accomplishments of Sugar Land. Trails provide access to the natural habitat in the city, and should offer ample opportunities to learn about the environment.

**(6) Safety** – Trails should provide smooth walkable corridors that are open and visible.

**(7) Beauty of the City** – Where possible, the trail system should contribute to enhancing the physical appearance of the city, whether through new pedestrian features, landscaping added to the trail corridors, or simply by revealing natural areas not previously visible to the general public.

**(8) Creating Partnerships** – The Citywide Trails System should encourage the creation of public and private partnerships that help build the entire system more quickly.



Methodology Used to Develop this Plan

The methodology used to develop this plan is graphically illustrated on this page. The process includes significant citizen input regarding where trails should be located throughout the city. The process also included extensive input from other entities such as levee improvement districts where non-city owned properties may be considered as trail corridors.



Who Will Implement this Plan?

The implementation of The Hike and Bike System Master Plan will be lead by the City of Sugar Land and its Parks and Recreation Department. However, everyone in Sugar Land has a vested interest in developing a citywide trail system. Key implementers will include:

- Primary responsibility – the City of Sugar Land Parks and Recreation Department;
- All area governmental entities, including the City of Sugar Land, Fort Bend County, the Houston Galveston Area Council (H-GAC), all area school districts, and other entities such as TxDOT, levee improvement districts, etc.;
- In their own way, all departments within the City of Sugar Land, from Community Development to Public Works and even the Police and Fire Departments should work with the Parks and Recreation Department to implement components of the plan;
- Other single purpose governmental entities, such as area Levee Improvement Districts (LID's) and Flood Control Districts;
- The business community of Sugar Land, including property owners, developers, commercial entities and others;
- Community homeowner associations (HOA's) as representatives of the residents who live in their neighborhoods;
- All citizens of Sugar Land, no matter which part of the City they live in;
- Adjacent residents of Fort Bend County, since the park system of Sugar Land is in effect their park system, and encouraging connections and building “bridges” to other adjacent systems.

This Hike and Bike System Master Plan follows the general guidelines for local park master plans established by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). This document will be filed with both the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and allows the city to better qualify for trail grant opportunities as they become available.

Timeframe for the Plan

The plan is formulated to address the five year time frame from the beginning of 2008 through the year 2012. While many of its recommendations will remain valid for a much longer period of time, periodic review is recommended to provide an opportunity for citizen feedback and to adjust for any major events or occurrences that may significantly alter the recommendations of the plan.





Previous Hike and Bike System Recommendations

The creation of trails throughout the City has been a goal for many years, starting with the 1996 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. That plan had as one of its major recommendations the construction of hike and bike trails throughout the community.

The City's Comprehensive Plan, entitled Sugar Land 2021 – Our Vision, The Community of Choice was adopted in early 2003 and listed multiple goals that relate to the Citywide Hike and Bike Plan. These include:

- **Goal One:** Preserve and enhance a beautiful City that is clean, safe and aesthetically pleasing; a city that will foster pride and appeal to our citizens, corporate community and visitors.
- **Goal Five:** Provide a multi-modal transportation system that economically accommodates the convenient, efficient and safe movement of people and goods while working to maintain neighborhood integrity.
- **Goal Nine:** Provide a park system that meets the total recreation and leisure needs of the community. Identify, protect and preserve open spaces and critical natural areas.
- **Goal Ten:** Provide and/or support activities and facilities that enrich the artistic, cultural, educational and historical character of Sugar Land.
- **Goal Twelve:** Provide equal opportunity and encourage participation of all citizens in the economic, social and civic life of the community, while recognizing racial, cultural, religious, age and individual differences in this diverse community.
- **Goal Thirteen:** Continue to refine and expand

the vision of Sugar Land as a dynamic guide for the future.

The City's Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, adopted in 2004, further reinforced many of the goals and ideals established in the Comprehensive Plan. The Parks Master Plan

specifically noted the following:

As the highest outdoor recreation facility need - "Develop trails throughout the community. Provide safe off-street pedestrian and bicycle linkages to existing and new parks and schools, as well as various economic, municipal and recreational destinations."

"Providing Nature trails/greenway corridors within the community will serve to protect and/or enhance natural, cultural and historical resources; provide linear open space for compatible human use and maintain connectivity between parks, recreation areas cultural areas and historic sites."

"Develop a Hike and Bike Trail Master Plan Update to identify trail opportunities to connect to existing and proposed trails. Create a trail network within the city limits as well as the ETJ, with prioritized recommendations."

In citizen surveys conducted as part of the Parks Master Plan Update, Hike and bike trails were ranked as the number one need by citizens of Sugar Land, and as the number two need by teens (second only to the need for a teen center). Overall, trails were the second highest need behind a recreation center.



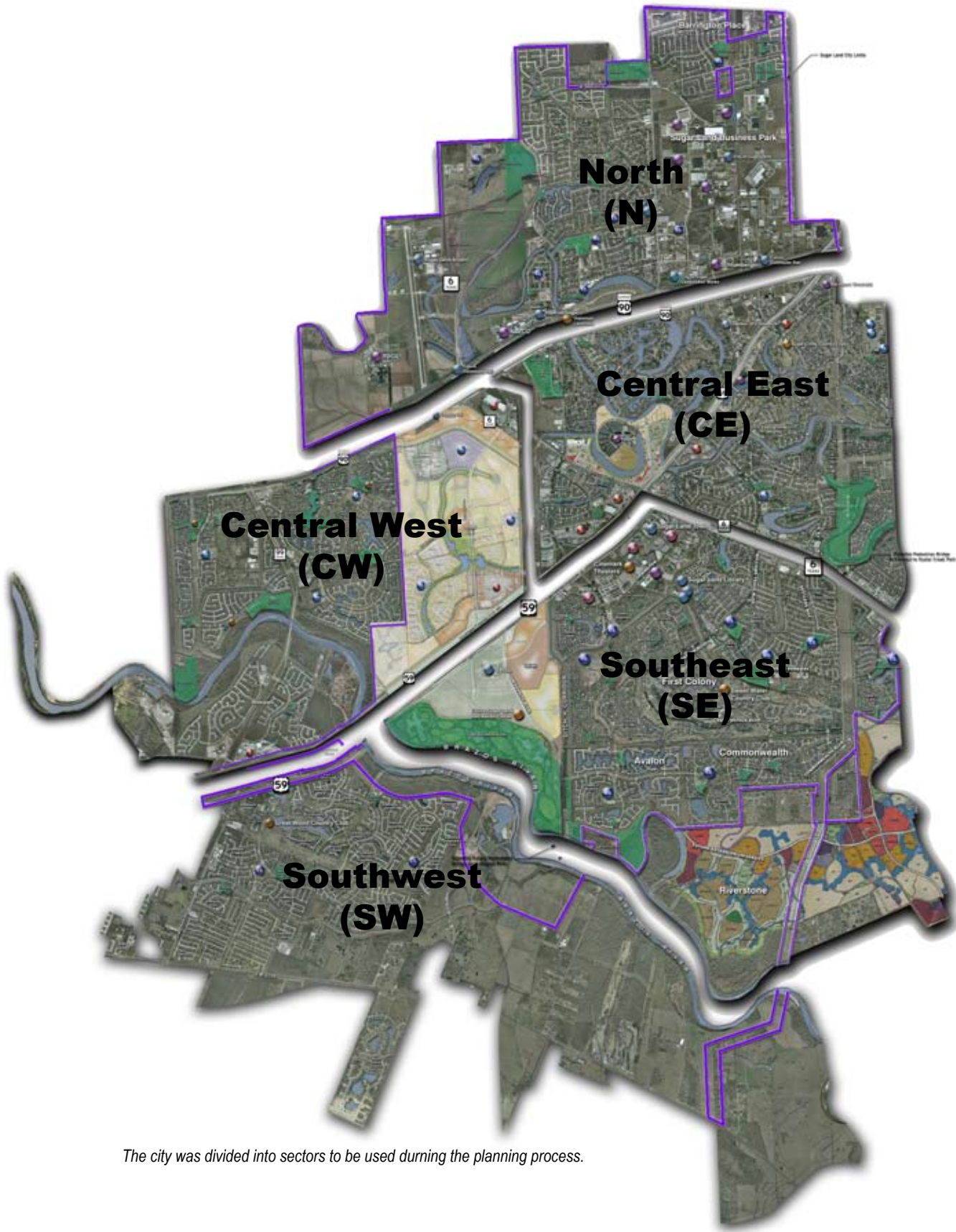


**Specific Goals of this Hike and Bike System Master Plan**

1. **Provide trails that link all parks of the City** - Ensure the development of a balanced system that ultimately allows access from all parts of the city.
2. **Provide a variety of trail opportunity types** – Provide trails that are suitable for a variety of activities, including running, walking, cycling and in-line skating. Provide nature trail opportunities and equestrian facilities where feasible. Consider facilities for water trails along the Brazos River corridor.
3. **Compatibility with adjacent private properties** – create trails that respect and preserve the rights of adjacent homeowners, but that provide access to as many residents of the city as possible.
4. **Create multiple neighborhood access points** – encourage use of the trail system by creating easy access to the system.
5. **Focus on connectivity** – create routes that link to multiple destinations, including schools, parks, commercial areas and other civic facilities.
6. **Include interpretive facilities** – where feasible, incorporate signs and features that provide opportunities for learning about Sugar Land and its cultural and ecological heritage.
7. **Consider both transportation and recreational use of trail corridors** – create facilities that can allow for commuting and short trips to retail and civic destinations.
8. **Create aesthetically pleasing trail corridors that enhance Sugar Land** – include enhancements along trail corridors that beautify the City. Incorporate these as a standard feature in every trail, so that trails become signature features of the City.







The city was divided into sectors to be used during the planning process.

Planning by Sectors

To allow for more detailed study in all parts of the city, Sugar Land was divided into five planning sectors. These sectors are shown on the map on this page, and use major highways or drainage corridors as the boundaries between sectors. The hike and bike trail plan includes areas both within the current city limits and in Sugar Land’s extra territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).